



City of Somerville

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

DESIGN REVIEW RECOMMENDATION

15 McGrath Highway

August 6, 2021

The Urban Design Commission (UDC) met virtually via GoToWebinar on June 8, 2021 and June 22, 2021 to review the **9-Story Lab Building** proposed at 15 McGrath Highway in the High Rise zoning district. The purpose of design review, as established by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, is for peers in the professional design community to provide advice and recommendations during the schematic design phase of the architectural design process. In accordance with the UDC's adopted Rules of Procedure and Section 15.1.4 Design Review of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, this recommendation includes, at least, the following:

1. Identification of the preferred schematic design option
2. Identification if applicable design guidelines are satisfied
3. Guidance and recommended modifications to address any design issues or concerns

Design review was conducted over the course of two meetings and the Commission guided the Applicant through various recommendations and suggestions to the applicants preferred building schematic designs. Recommendations that were incorporated into the design through the review process included further refinement of jewel box massing to create more differentiation from the rest of the building façade; create variation between façades materiality, and redesign northwestern corner of the building so its not as abrupt.

Following a presentation of the revised design by the Applicant and review of the design guidelines for the HR district, the Commission provided the following final guidance and recommended modifications:

- Differentiate the horizontal datum on the left-hand side of the building entrance while maintaining the building canopy and its separation from the jewel box above.
- Need more development at transition where main façade turns the corner to the solid façade. Design needs to take inspiration from the section that divides of the jewel box from the rest of the building.

The Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend applicants preferred massing option (jewel box), voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend applicants preferred façade concept, voted (3-0) that all the design guidelines for the HR district were satisfied, and voted (3-0) that that the Planning Board needs to be made aware that the final public

realm improvements for the site were not resolved due to lack of resolution with MA DOT at the time of voting.

Attest, by the voting membership:

Frank Valdes
Debora Fennick
Tim Talun

Attest, by the meeting Co-Chairs:

Sarah Lewis
Luisa Oliveria



Sarah Lewis,
UDC Co-Chair
Director of Planning &
Zoning

APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES:

HR – HIGH RISE DISTRICT			
LANGUAGE	SATISFIED?	PRIORITY?	NOTES
Facades should be visually divided into a series of architectural bays that are derived, in general, from the building's structural bay spacing.	YES (3-0)		
Piers, pilasters, or other features defining each architectural bay should either extend all the way to the ground or terminate at any horizontal articulation defining the base of the building.	YES (3-0)		
Architectural bays should align, in general, with individual or groups of storefronts and lobby entrances.	YES (3-0)		
Piers, pilasters, or other features defining each architectural bay should always project forward and be uninterrupted by any horizontal articulation, excluding any horizontal articulation used to differentiate the base of the building.	YES (3-0)		
Vents, exhausts, and other utility features on building facades should be architecturally integrated into the design of the building and should be located to minimize adverse effects on pedestrian comfort along sidewalks and within open spaces.	YES (3-0)		
Buildings at terminated vistas should be articulated with design features that function as focal points.	YES (3-0)		
Fenestration glazing should be inset from the plane of exterior wall surfaces.	YES (3-0)		
Ribbon windows should be avoided.	YES (3-0)		
Monotonous and repetitive storefront or lobby systems, awnings, canopies, sign types, colors, or designs should be avoided.	YES (3-0)		
Storefronts and lobby entrances should include awnings or canopies to provide weather protection for pedestrians and reduce glare for storefront display areas. Awnings should be open-ended and operable.	YES (3-0)		
Lobby entrances for upper story uses should be optimally located, well defined, clearly visible, and separate from the entrance for other ground story uses.	YES (3-0)		
Lobbies should be limited in both width and total area to preserve floor space and frontage for other ground story uses. Buildings should use any combination of facade articulation, a double-height ceiling, a distinctive doorway, a change in wall material, a change in paving material within the frontage area, or some other architectural element(s) to make lobbies visual and materially distinctive.	YES (3-0)		

HR – HIGH RISE DISTRICT			
LANGUAGE	SATISFIED?	PRIORITY?	NOTES
The selection of materials, fenestration, and ornamentation should result in a consistent and harmonious composition that appears as a unified whole rather than a collection of unrelated parts.	YES (3-0)		
The type and color of materials should be kept to a minimum, preferably three (3) or fewer.	YES (3-0)		
Two (2) or more wall materials should be combined only one above the other, except for bay windows.	YES (3-0)		
Wall materials appearing heavier in weight should be used below wall materials appearing lighter in weight (wood and metal above brick, and all three above stone)	YES (3-0)		
Horizontal or vertical board siding or shingles, regardless of material, should be avoided.	YES (3-0)		
Architectural details and finish materials for the base of a building should be constructed of architectural concrete or pre-cast cementitious panels, natural or cast stone, heavy gauge metal panels, glazed or unglazed architectural terracotta, or brick.	YES (3-0)		
Exterior Insulation and Finish Systems (EIFS) should be avoided.	YES (3-0)		

Design Review Evolution of Building Façade



6/8/2021



6/22/2021

REMAINING CONCERN
Building Entrance Canopy



REMAINING CONCERN
West Side of Building - Corner Transition

